

Northwest Territory Collection

Defense & Exploration of Territory

Tommy Coy

OVERVIEW: With the victory of the Americans over the British in the Revolutionary War came a large amount of territory that many of the Founding Fathers knew barely anything about. That territory needed to be explored, laid out for defense and for possible governance, and needed to be mapped for geographical purposes. The territory that would eventually become the states of Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota had little but military forts and a large number of Native Americans. Very little was known about this area, and thus Secretary of War Henry Knox, one of President George Washington's most trusted military advisors, believed something must be done to explore the area. Meanwhile, the few citizens that did live in the area, and those that might migrate to the area, must be protected. In the last half of the letter written by Henry Knox, he outlines his course of action for settlement, development, and other necessary tasks for the area.

SUGGESTED COLLECTION PIECES: Northwest Territory Collection: Henry Knox Letter to President Washington (#3)
<http://images.indianahistory.org/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/ONWT&CISOPTR=489&REC=4>, pg. 16-31

OBJECTIVES: *Learners will...*

- *Identify on a map the major cities and areas that would become major cities in the territories.*
- *List a plan of action that should be taken to explore the area.*
- *Decide the best way to protect the people against the Native Americans.*
- *Evaluate if the plan that Secretary Knox outlines is the best plan, and come up with their own plan.*

DESCRIPTION:

- 1.) **Read.** The students will be given the last pages of the document to read and take notes on the major course of action being taken by Secretary Knox. The students can make/outline/highlight any necessary information that may be vital to helping them answer the questions given.
- 2.) **Answer the following Questions:**
 - a.) *What does Henry Knox feel is the best solution to handling the Native Americans living in the area?*
 - b.) *What does Knox propose the government do?*
 - c.) *What Indian tribes does he discuss coming to terms with?*
 - d.) *What does he say about the British and the French?*
- 3.) **Devise their own course of action.** In their own words, the students can now form their own course of action on how to deal with/handle

the three major “enemies” of the area: the British, the French, and the many Native American tribes. Would they use military means? Treaties? Peaceful negotiations? Trade? What would they do. That is their mission, to write their own letter to President Washington outlining a plan.

- 4.) **Reflect.** Is the U.S. ready for such a bold exploration? Can they handle something like this? How much power does the government of the United States have in territories? All questions the students will have to deeply think about and can move into a possible Socratic Seminar.

STANDARDS:

- 8.1.30 Formulate historical questions by analyzing primary* and secondary sources* about an issue confronting the United States during the period from 1754–1877.*
- 8.2.4 Examine functions of the national government in the lives of people.*